

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, CA, CU

SUBJ: TRUDEAU CRITIZED IN COMMONS FOR CUBAN TRIP

1. PM TRUDEAU'S RETURN TO COMMONS TUESDAY FOLLOWING LATIN AMERICA TRIP SPARKED ROWDY QUESTION PERIOD DOMINATED BY CRITICISM OF VISIT TO CUBA.

2. OPPOSITION MP TOM COSSITT INTRODUCED MOTION FOR "IMMEDIATE AND COMPLETE ACCOUNT TO PARLIAMENT" OF "THE PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONABLE GUSHING AND STAGE-STRUCK ADMIRATION FOR PRIME MINISTER CASTRO AND HIS DOCTATORIAL SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT." OPPOSITION LEADER STANFIELD THEN ASKED TRUDEAU WHY HE HAD NOT USED THE "VERY ACCEPTABLE DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE" OF POSTPONING VISIT TO CUBA TO SHOW CANADIAN DISAPPROVAL OF CASTRO'S "FOREIGN ADVENTURISM" IN ANGOLA. TRUDEAU REPLIED TO THE EFFECT THAT CANADA'S DISAPPROVAL HAD BEEN MADE CLEAR BEFORE VISIT, THAT ANY POSTPONEMENT WOULD HAVE LASTED FOR A LONG WHILE, AND THAT HE FELT IT DESIRABLE THAT HIS VISIT TO CUBA "SHOULD PRECEDE ANY POSSIBLE VISIT OF A HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL FROM THE UNITED STATES." STANFIELD RETORTED WITH RHETORICAL COMMENT THAT VISIT WAS PERCEIVED IN WOULD AS "GREAT FOR FIDEL CASTRO. WHAT DID IT DO FOR CANADA".

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3. Diefenbaker then pressed Trudeau on what specifically he had told Castro in reported "brutally frank" discussion on Angola, assuming it contained no four-letter words. Trudeau answered that conversation lasted three hours during which time he emphasized points that foreign intervention had "destabilizing effect" on Angola and Cuban involvement was "serious mistake", not only for harm done in Africa but also because Cubans were doing "a fair amount of harm to themselves." He said he told Castro that he would be "well-advised" to withdraw troops. Trudeau also took swipe at Diefenbaker by mentioning that there had been "no noticeable cooling off of relations" between Diefenbaker government and Cuba in 1962 "after Cuba had accepted missiles which were pointed at the heart of the United States."

4. Through remaining questions, Trudeau maintained line that relations with Cuba had been policy of conservatives, that he considered trip in Canada's best interest, and that he would not weaken diplomatic or commercial relations with Cuba because of disagreement on Angolan issue. He did agree, however, to provide commons with list of foreign aid items given to Cuba to ascertain that none would be used in Angolan war effort.

5. In one question, opposition MP McKinnon questioned Extrajet Maceachen on an East German Interflug plane which allegedly landed and refueled at Goose Bay last Wednesday en route from Cuba to points east. Maceachen professed to have no log on flights from East European countries stopping at Goose Bay but added that he recalled two scheduled flights to Cuba stopping at Goose Bay in last months. He denied charge that Canada was becoming a "staging area" for Cuban traffic going to Europe or Angola. Embassy will check official record of session to check if Maceachen may have confused Goose Bay flights with Gander flights publicized this week.

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